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LABELING OF INSPECTED AND GRADED POULTRY PRODUCTS



AMS-265

Revised

**United States Department of Agriculture
Agricultural Marketing Service • Poultry Division
Washington, D.C.**

INTRODUCTION

This booklet has been prepared as a guide to processors and packers of poultry products. It explains what information is required to be placed on labels for such products, in what manner this is to be done, how grade labeling may be done, what may not be included in a label, the procedure for approval of labels, etc.

The Poultry Products Inspection Act provides for the Federal inspection of slaughtered poultry and poultry products shipped in interstate and foreign commerce or in a designated major consuming area. Ready-to-cook and further processed products must be labeled according to the requirements set forth in §81.125 through §81.148 of the Regulations Governing the Inspection of Poultry and Poultry Products (7 CFR Part 81).

In addition, if the product is officially graded and identified under the USDA voluntary grading program, it must comply with the labeling requirements of §§70.380 and 70.381 of the Regulations Governing the Grading and Inspection of Poultry and Edible Products Thereof and United States Classes, Standards and Grades With Respect Thereto (7 CFR Part 70).

False or misleading statements are not permitted on any label that is used on containers of poultry products or that accompanies such products.

The Poultry Division in the Agricultural Marketing Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, has the responsibility for administering these labeling regulations.

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LABELING OF INSPECTED AND GRADED POULTRY PRODUCTS

PROCEDURE FOR LABEL APPROVAL

Labeling or identification to be used by plants operating under the inspection and grading services must be officially approved before being used. All material relevant to requests for label approval should be submitted to the Poultry Products Section, Inspection Branch, Poultry Division, Agricultural Marketing Service, United States Department of Agriculture, Washington 25, D.C.

Section 81.127 of the inspection regulations states in part that no label, except printers' proofs, bearing official identification shall be printed until the printers' proof or a photostatic copy has been found by the AMS Administrator to be acceptable. Therefore, it is necessary that the proofs or sketches be submitted in triplicate with three copies of Form PY-132 for review and comment before final labels are printed. (Hand drawn or paste-up sketches are also acceptable.)

After review by the Poultry Products Section, the proposed labels will be commented on, and one copy of each label and Form PY-132 will be returned to the applicant. If the labels are satisfactory for printing, it will be so noted on Form PY-132. Any slight modifications necessary before printing will also be noted. When final labels are printed, triplicate copies together with three copies of Form PY-132 again must be submitted for approval. When approval is issued, one copy will be returned to the official plant, one copy sent to the Inspector-in-Charge, and the third copy retained in the Washington, D.C., office.

For Two or More Ingredients

When submitting sketches or labels for poultry products containing two or more ingredients, triplicate copies of the product formula and description of the method of manufacture must accompany the submittal. The product formula should list percentages or batch weights of each ingredient used. All flavorings and spices must be listed in the formula by their common or usual name. When mixtures of spices, breadings, cures and the like are used in poultry products and the processor does not know their formulations, the submitted formula must indicate the percentage or quantity of the mix used, the name of the mixture, and the name and address of the firm that manufactures the product. The applicant should then instruct the firm who

prepares such mixtures to forward their formulas to the Poultry Products Section. Such information will be kept in the confidential files of the Poultry Products Section to be used only in verifying the accuracy of ingredient statements on labels for poultry products containing the mixtures.

MANDATORY INFORMATION FOR IMMEDIATE CONTAINER LABEL or CONSUMER PACKAGED PRODUCT

I. The Common or Usual Name of the Poultry Product.

Coined names for poultry products which do not denote to the consumer what product is contained therein are not acceptable unless qualified by wording accurately describing the contents of the package.

A. Whole Birds.

The name of the product to be shown on labels for chilled or frozen raw whole birds may be in either of the following forms:

(1) The complete class name (fryer, young hen turkey, broiler duckling, etc.) as set forth in §81.131. The class may be appropriately modified by changing the word form such as using the term "Roasting Chicken" rather than "Roaster." (2) The name of the kind (chicken, turkey, duck) in addition to the class name or, (3) The name of the kind preceded by the qualifying term, "young," "mature," or "old," whichever is appropriate. The name of the kind alone without the qualifying age or class term is not acceptable as the name of the product.

B. Cut-up, Halved or Quartered Birds.

On labels for a ready-to-cook pack of chilled or frozen cut-up poultry or of a half or quartered young bird the kind alone is accepted as meaning "frying" or "young chicken"; "fryer-roaster" or "young turkey"; or "duckling," etc., and may be used without qualification. If mature birds are used, the label must also include the class name or the qualifying word "mature" or "old"; for example, "Cut-up Fowl."

C. Cut-up Parts.

For cut-up parts, the labels must identify the product by names listed in §81.131, except that the

regulations further state that parts of poultry may be cut in any manner the processor desires as long as the labeling appropriately reflects the contents of the container of such poultry. For parts of young poultry, the label must identify both the kind of poultry and the name of the part; for instance, "Chicken Breasts." If the parts or portions are cut from mature poultry, the label must also include the class name or the qualifying word "mature"; for example, "Stewing Chicken Breasts" or "Chicken Livers from Mature Birds."

D. Cooked or Heat-processed Poultry Products.

Labels for cooked or heat-processed poultry products must include the name of the product and the kind of poultry from which it was prepared; for instance, "Chicken Pie" or "Canned Whole Chicken." Qualifying terms, such as "young" or "mature," or the class of the poultry used in the preparation of the product may be used but are not required.

II. A Statement of Ingredients.

For any product containing two or more ingredients, the label must bear an ingredient statement listing each component by its common or usual name in order of descending preponderance, including a declaration as to artificial flavors, colors, or preservatives, if any. All true spices, except turmeric, may be listed as spices. Turmeric must be listed separately since it imparts color to the product. All spice extractives and powdered vegetables may be listed as flavorings or seasonings.

The term "chicken meat" unless modified by an appropriate adjective, is construed to mean deboned white and dark meat, whereas the term "chicken" may include other edible parts such as

skin and fat not in excess of their natural proportions in addition to the chicken meat. If the term "chicken meat" is listed and the product also contains skin, giblets, or fat, it is necessary to list each such ingredient. This terminology shall apply to poultry products prepared from other kinds of poultry where applicable.

III. Net Weight or Other Appropriate Measure of Contents.

The net weight marked on immediate containers of poultry products shall be the net weight of the poultry products and shall not include the weights of the wet or dry packaging materials and giblet wrapping materials. This shall be shown as follows:

Net Weight ____ Lbs. ____ Oz.

or for broths only--

Net Contents: (Appropriate fluid measurement)

The net weight may be omitted on consumer packages provided the retailer or distributor supplying the retailer agrees in writing to mark the true net weight on the label prior to display and sale; and provided further, that the shipping container labels bear the total net weight and the following statement:

-Net weight to be marked on consumer packages prior to display and sale.

Triplicate copies of the agreement must be submitted to the Poultry Products Section for approval.

Following is a suggested form for a letter of agreement:

Date

To Whom It May Concern:

The following is an agreement between the shipper and buyer in order to comply with the Regulations Governing the Inspection of Poultry and Poultry Products issued pursuant to the Poultry Products Inspection Act (21 U.S.C. et seq.). With respect to poultry and poultry products sold to ____ (Buyer's Name) ____, whose address is _____, the ____ (Shipper's Name) ____ whose address is _____, agrees to place the correct net weight on each master or shipping container and the following statement on such containers: "Net weight to be marked on consumer packages prior to display and sale."

Likewise, the ____ (Buyer's Name) ____ agrees to place the correct net weight on each consumer package prior to display and sale.

Signed _____

Shipper

Buyer

Net weight may also be omitted from consumer packages of products intended for export, provided the wording "for export" appears on the shipping container label.

IV. Name and Address of the Packer or Distributor.

When the name and address of the packer are used, they must agree with the official name and address shown on the firm's application for inspection. When the name and address of the distributor are shown, they must be qualified by such terms as "Packed for," "Distributed by," or "Distributors."

V. The Official Inspection Mark.

The mark shall appear as an exact facsimile of the mark illustrated in Figure 1 and shall be clearly and legibly printed on a plain background. It is preferred that the mark be at least 3/4 of an inch in diameter. The plant number need not be shown within the circle if it appears elsewhere on the labeling material in the manner prescribed in the regulations. The inspection mark may be printed or stencilled on consumer packages, immediate containers and shipping containers, but may not be applied by means of a rubber stamp.



Fig. 1

VI. The Plant Number of the Official Establishment in which the Product was Inspected.

The plant number shall appear within the inspection mark or in close proximity elsewhere on the exterior of the container. In the case of nontransparent consumer packages, the plant number may be shown on an insert label placed on top of the product within the package. For transparent wrappers, the plant number may be shown on an insert label

placed under the covering so as to be clearly legible.

The number may also be legibly stamped on the closure used on plastic bags. For canned products, the plant number may be embossed on the can lid. For poultry pies, the number may be embossed on the bottom of the pie pan.

LABELING OF PRODUCTS WITH GRADE MARK

Poultry products which have been officially graded may bear the official U. S. Grade designations. The grade mark is in the form of a shield as illustrated in Figure 2 and shall be printed with light colored letters on a dark field. The grade mark may be accompanied with wording such as, "Federal-State Graded" or "Government Graded" and such wording shall be adjacent to but not within the shield (Figure 3). The mark shall be printed on consumer packages or on a label to be securely affixed to such packages. When applied to shipping containers it may be printed, stencilled or applied by rubber stamping.



Fig. 2



Fig. 3

LABELING OF CONSUMER PACKAGES OF RAW PRODUCTS

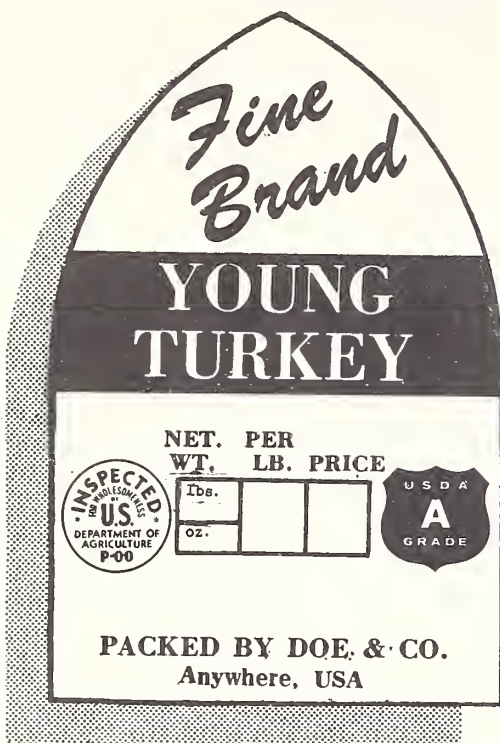


Fig. 4



Fig. 5

LABELING OF CONSUMER PACKAGES OF PREPARED PRODUCTS

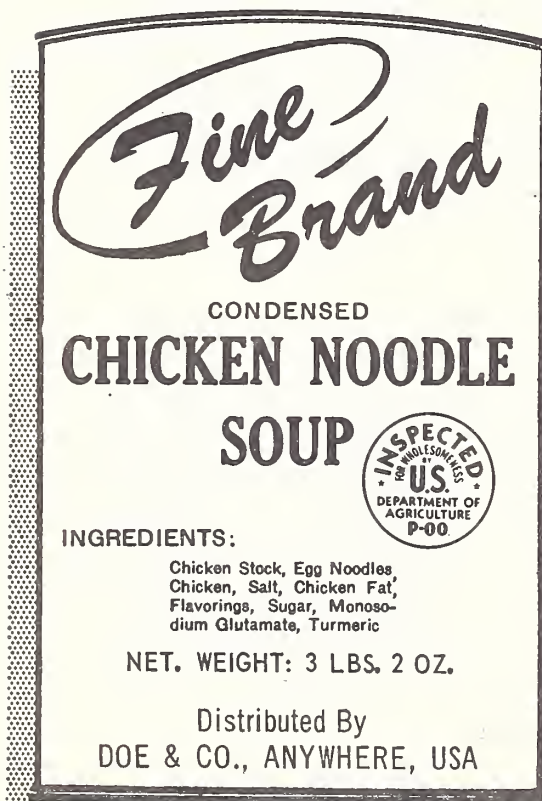


Fig. 6



IN ORDER OF DECREASING
PROPORTIONS OF PRODUCTS.

Fig. 7

LABELING FOR ICE-PACKED POULTRY

In most cases the shipping container for ice-packed poultry becomes the immediate container (wooden crate or fiberboard box) and is required to bear all of the mandatory information (Figure 8). The labeling information may be printed on the container; printed on a label or tag that is stapled or glued to the container; applied by rubber stamps or stencils; or a combination of printing, stamping or stencilling, except that the inspection mark shall not be applied by means of a rubber stamp but may be stencilled or printed on the container or its label. The numerical figures indicating the net weight and the number of birds may be legibly written in a space provided for this purpose with an indelible non-smearing material.

Some firms find it convenient to have most of the information printed on the box at the time of manufacture and then apply the net weight, number of birds and -- in some instances -- the name of the product (fryers, young chickens, fowl, chicken breasts, roasting chickens, etc.) by rubber stamping such information in the space provided on the container.

LABELING OF ICE-PACKED PRODUCT

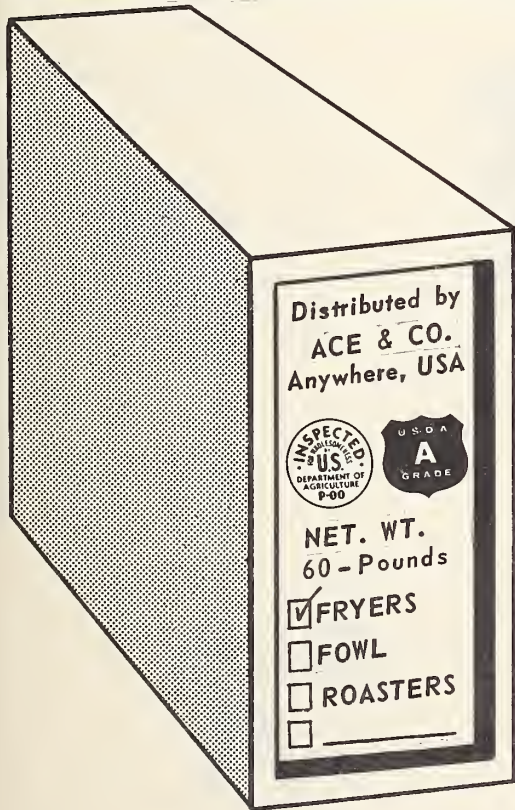


Fig. 8

LABELING FOR SHIPPING CONTAINERS

Shipping containers need be labeled only with the inspection mark and the plant number (Figure 9). They may, however, contain such additional labeling information as the packer desires. Shipping container labels must also be approved prior to their use. To facilitate mailing, filing and handling of corrugated shipping container labels, it is requested that the outer layer of paper which bears the printed material be stripped from the container. An alternate method would be to have the printer to print sufficient samples on plain paper for making submittals.

Inspectors in charge have been authorized to approve shipping container labels for further processed items at plants which do not slaughter and eviscerate.

LABELING FOR WING TAGS AND METAL CLIPS

When wing tags or metal clips bearing the inspection mark or grade mark, or both, are attached to poultry carcasses they shall show either the plant number or the firm name and address. When both

LABELING OF SHIPPING CONTAINERS

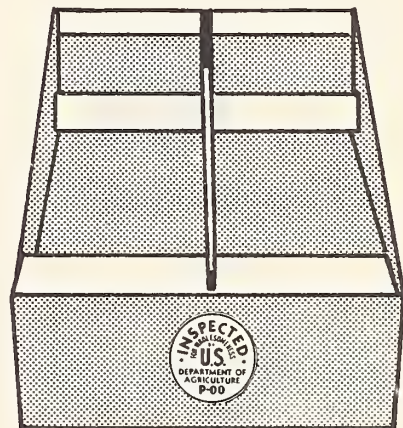


Fig. 9

the inspection and grade marks appear on a tag they shall be shown on the same side. Both marks may also appear on each side of the tag.

Wing tags or metal clips bearing the grade mark, that are applied to poultry that is not consumer packaged, shall show the class of the product (Figures 10, 11, 13 and 14). Wing tags bearing only the inspection mark need not show the class name (Figure 12). Wing tags of shield design shall not be used for showing the inspection mark only, but may be used to show both marks (Figure 11), or the grade mark singly.

In the case of multiple-bird ice pack, when the grade mark appears on a tag or clip without the inspection mark (Figure 13), the inspection mark shall be printed on the giblet wrapper and packed with the bird. If the tag or clip does not show the plant number (Figure 14), then the plant number shall be shown on the giblet wrapper and the name and address of the packer must appear on the tag or clip.

PRINTED GIBLET WRAPS

Printed material may appear on a giblet wrap. However, if the printed area exceeds that of a two-inch diameter inspection mark, the firm must certify that the ink used is compounded from U.S. certified colors and other edible components.

PROTECTIVE COVERINGS

Protective coverings on products are not required to bear any labeling information but may bear printing so long as such information is not false or misleading. The distinction between protective covering as such and protective covering that is an immediate container or consumer package is based largely on the definition of "Consumer Package"--which means "any container in which a product is enclosed for the purpose of display and sale to household consumers."

Coverings such as butcher's paper and waxed paper are not used to enclose and display poultry to household consumers in retail stores and are,

WING TAGS



Fig. 10



Fig. 11



Fig. 12

METAL WING CLIPS



Fig. 13



Fig. 14

therefore, considered "strictly" as protective coverings.

Coverings such as plastic film bags or cardboard cartons may fall in either category depending on where and how the product is to be merchandised. When such products are sold to institutions or for export they may be considered "strictly" as protective covering. However, when such products are sold to consumers they would be considered as consumer packaged or immediate containers, in which case they would have to bear the mandatory labeling information. To display and sell such

products to household consumers without the mandatory information would be a violation of the Poultry Products Inspection Act.

In all instances where protective coverings are used in multiple or single-unit packs, shipping containers would be considered as immediate containers and would have to bear all the mandatory information.

Tray packs are considered to be consumer packages and, therefore, they shall contain labeling applicable to immediate containers.

